

in...

Wilhoite

Thomas Mack Wilhoite--born in Guthrie, Ky., on 12 February 1921--enlisted in the Naval Reserve as a seaman 2d class on 16 June 1941 at Atlanta, Ga., and received his aviation training indoctrination at the Naval Reserve Air Base, Atlanta, from 16 June to 1 August. He then reported for flight instruction at the Naval Air Station (NAS), Pensacola, Fla., on 7 August, and was appointed an aviation cadet the following day. Transferred to NAS, Miami, Fla., on 15 January 1942 for further training, he became a naval aviator on 6 February.

Three days later, he received promotion to ensign, and at the end of February reported to the Advanced Carrier Training Group, Atlantic Fleet, NAS, Norfolk, Va. There, he joined Fighter Squadron (VF) 9, then fitting out, and, in time, became the assistant navigation officer for that squadron.

Operation "Torch"--the invasion of French North Africa--saw VF-9 assigned to the carrier Ranger (CV-4). Each section of VF-9 drew assigned tasks on 8 November 1942, the first days of the landings, and Wilhoite, flying a Grumman F4F-4 "Wildcat," together with four others, attacked the French airdrome at Rabat-Sale--the headquarters of the French air forces in Morocco. He pressed home a determined attack, despite heavy antiaircraft fire, and set three French bombers afire with his guns.

Later that day, Wilhoite flew as part of the third flight, in a second strike directed at the Port Lyautey airdrome, and destroyed one fighter--a Dewoitine 520--by strafing. The Vichy ground gunners, however, served their weapons well, and Wilhoite's "Wildcat" took hits from the intense flak crashing about one mile from Port Lyautey.

Wilhoite received a silver star, posthumously, for displaying "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity" during the strikes at Rabat-Sale and Port Lyautey. The accompanying citation also cited Wilhoite's "superb airmanship and tenacious devotion to duty" in pressing home his strafing attacks. Although he was killed in action, Wilhoite had played his part in the significant operations of VF-9 in neutralizing Vichy French air power that, if unhindered, could have severely hampered Operation "Torch."

I


(DE-397: dp. 1,200; l. 306'0"; b. 36'7"; dr. 8'7" (mean); s. 21 k.;
cpl. 186; a. 3 3", 2 40 mm., 10 20 mm., 2 dct., 8 dcp., 1 dcp.
(hh.); cl. Edsall)

Wilhoite (DE-397) was laid down on 4 August 1943 at Houston, Tex., by the Brown Shipbuilding Co.; launched on 5 October 1943; sponsored by Mrs. Corinne M. Wilhoite, mother of the ship's namesake; and commissioned at Houston on 16 December 1943, Lt. Eli B. Roth in command.

After her shakedown out of Great Sound, Bermuda, from 9 January to 10 February 1944, Wilhoite underwent post-shakedown availability at the Charleston Navy Yard, Charleston, S. C., from 11 to 21 February. She then got underway for Gibraltar with convoy UGS (United States to Gibraltar) 34 on 23 February. On two occasions during the voyage, the destroyer escort depth-charged what were thought to be submarine contacts, but in neither case could claim conclusive proof. After turning the convoy over to British escort vessels once she had passed through the Straits of Gibraltar, Wilhoite returned to the United States with convoy GUS (Gibraltar to the United States) 33, making arrival at New York City on 3 April.

The destroyer escort operated briefly with submarines and PT-boats, and conducted antiaircraft firing practice in Block Island Sound after a 10-day availability at the New York Navy Yard, Brooklyn, N. Y., before she shifted south to the Tidewater area, picking up convoy UGS-40 in Hampton Roads late in April.

The trans-Atlantic passage proved largely uneventful, but as the convoy transited the Straits of Gibraltar, the British antiaircraft cruiser HMS Caledon, the destroyer Benson (DD-420) and two minesweepers equipped with special jamming apparatus, Steady (AM-118) and Sustain (AM-119), joined them. Increased German air activity had prompted concern over the safety of UGS-40, a large and important convoy consisting of some 80 vessels.

At 2106 on 11 May, Wilhoite picked up "bogeys" on her search radar at a distance of 18 miles northeast of UGS-40. Two minutes later, the screening ships commenced their barrage, observers in Wilhoite saw the attacking planes, ^{torpedo-carrying} Junkers (JU) 88's ~~carrying torpedoes~~, shear away from the ^{flak} ~~barrage~~, fly aft along the transport screen to the northward, and then cut across the stern of the convoy, circling. 

Wilhoite--coordinating the defense of ^{her} ~~one~~ sector of the convoy ~~in her vicinity~~--laid several barrages with her three-inch, 40-millimeter and 20-millimeter guns as the JU-88's came around the stern of the convoy.

One JU-88 singled out Wilhoite as her target and attacked, at about 2123. Wilhoite accordingly brought all guns to bear and laid down such a heavy and accurate barrage that the German pilot dropped his torpedo at 2,000 yards ~~range~~; the plane then banked sharply, apparently damaged by the flak, and disappeared in the ship's own smokescreen.

The heavy antiaircraft fire from the ~~then~~^Vconvoy's escorts and the attacks ~~made~~ by "friendly" fighters, downed an estimated 17 of the enemy torpedo planes. The convoy itself suffered no losses, and ~~it~~ reached its destination, Bizerte, Tunisia, safely. For his part ~~in~~^u directing Wilhoite's highly successful sector defense of UGS-40, Lieutenant Roth, the ship's commanding officer, received a Letter of Commendation.

Wilhoite rested at Bizerte from 13 to 21 May, before she got underway ^{to} ~~to~~ return to the United States with convoy GUS-40. At 2105 on 29 May, however, Wilhoite and Evarts (DE-5) were detached from the screen of GUS-40 to go to the aid of Task Group (TG) 21.11.

Northwest of the Canary Islands, the German U-boat U-549 had brazenly attacked TG 21.11, ^{torpedoing} ~~putting three~~ ~~torpedoes in~~ Block Island (CVE-21), and ~~one in~~ Barr (DE-576). The former sank quickly, but the latter remained afloat while Ahrens (DE-575) and Eugene E. Elmore (DE-686) combined to sink U-549. The latter then took the stricken Barr in tow.

Wilhoite and Evarts arrived on the scene at 1715 on the 30th; soon thereafter, Paine (DE-) and Ahrens sailed for Casablanca, Morocco. The remaining ships then set course for Casablanca as well, avoiding the track of two homeward-bound U-boats reportedly in the area. On the 31st, ^{the} ~~the~~ small seaplane tender Humboldt (AVP-) arrived, and assumed command over the little force.

At 0930 on 1 June, Eugene E. Elmore cast off the tow of Barr and Wilhoite picked it up; the former then heading independently for Casablanca. Moving ahead at eight knots, Wilhoite towed the damaged Barr, despite the latter's cracked hull that caused her to yaw and make ^{according to} towing difficult. Ultimately, good damage control in Barr lessened that problem, and, as the convoy neared Casablanca, ^{on 5 June} a ~~Netherlands~~ ^{Dutch} tug, HMRT Antic, joined, taking the damaged destroyer escort in tow and relieving Wilhoite of the task. PC-480 then relieved Wilhoite and Evarts of screening duties as the ships neared the swept channel at their destination.

Fueling at Casablanca, Wilhoite departed that Moroccan port-- her commanding officer, Lt. Roth--having earned a second letter of commendation for his ship's performance in towing Bahr to safety--and sailed to New York with GUS-41. There, after her arrival, the ship received repairs at the ~~NYC~~ New York Navy Yard before she sailed for battle practices in Casco Bay, Maine on 24 June. She later acted as a target in training exercises, for submarines operating out of New London, Conn., before she touched at New York once more. She then shifted south to Norfolk where she joined a hunter-killer task group based around the escort carrier Bogue (CVE-9), on 21 July.

Four days after her assignment to Bogue's group--TG 22.3--
Wilhoite sailed with that carrier and the rest of her screen,
Haverfield (DE-303), Swearing (DE-304) ⁹, Willis (DE-305), ^{and} Janssen
(DE-306), bound for Bermuda. Exercising in that area on antisubmarine warfare (ASW) exercises and night battle practice, ~~with~~ Bogue
and her consorts honed their respective ^{and} collective skills
in those areas for the rest of July and into the following month.

At 0630 on 3 August, however, a message arrived that cut short the training abruptly: TG 22.3 was to proceed to the vicinity of 46-15 N, 21-15 W for offensive operations against a westbound enemy submarine. At 1646 on the next day, Wilhoite picked up a sound contact and attacked at 1702; listeners picked up seven detonations but could ascertain no positive results. At 14⁰⁰95 on the 7th, the destroyer escort laid two "hedgehog" projectile patterns and one standard depth charge pattern on a target later evaluated as a school of fish!

Undaunted, the Rogue group remained at sea on the hunt. Ultimately, their vigilance ~~was~~ and training paid off. At 0043 on 19 August, ¹eight-flying aircraft from Rogue attacked a submarine running on the surface. Wilhoite was the first ship to hear the transmission, and relayed it to Rogue. Six minutes later, at 0040, Haverfield, Janssen and Svenning headed for the scene, detached to take part in the hunt while Wilhoite and Willis remained with Rogue as her screen. Meanwhile, the carrier launched planes, maintaining the start of a continuous air patrol over the area.

~~THEY WERE~~ Unfortunately, the trio of destroyer escorts returned empty-handed at 1225 on the 20th. No sooner had they returned, however, when carrier aircraft reported attacking a submarine that had just surfaced. Wilhoite, Janssen, Haverfield, and Willis ^{headed for} ~~proceeded to~~ the point of the attack--a spot some 60 miles distant--hearing a report at 1443 that the submarine (that had apparently submerged but had been damaged and brought to the surface) had again surfaced and was under attack.

Ultimately, the planes from Composite Squadron 42, flying from Bogue, inflicted enough damage on the submarine--later verified to be U-1229--to force the German crew to abandon ship. While Bogue's airmen watched, U-1220's crew went over the side; the submarine--scuttling charges apparently set--exploded and settled into the Atlantic. Later, at 1610, the destroyer escorts arrived on the scene; Wilhoite picked up one body of a German sailor, who was summarily buried at sea. Janssen picked up U-1229's survivors.

Ultimately, Wilhoite received the Presidential Unit Citation along with the other units of TG 22.3 for their submarine-hunting activities. Wilhoite had been a part of the powerful and sustained offensive during a period of heavy U-boat activity threatening the uninterrupted flow of supplies to the European theater that, since the Allied invasion of France in June of 1944, had assumed great importance. As the Presidential Unit Citation text concluded: "The gallantry and superb teamwork of the officers and men who fought the embarked planes and who manned Bogue and her escort vessels were largely instrumental in forcing the complete withdrawal of enemy submarines from supply routes essential to the maintenance of our established military supremacy."

But for ships like Wilhoite, however, there was little time to rest on her laurels. Germany was not beaten yet; there would still be more U-boats to fight.

Proceeding to Argentia after TG 22.3's kill of U-1229, Wilhoite and her consorts again went after enemy submarines reported in that area. Attacks made over a three-day period, 8, 9, and 10 September were all unsuccessful; Wilhoite then patrolled off the Grand Banks before she sailed for the New York Navy Yard at the end of September for voyage repairs.

Upon completion of her yard period on 7 October, Wilhoite trained off Montauk Point, Long Island, in ASW tactics before she got underway for Norfolk on 14 October with the remainder of CortDiv 51. Joining Bogue at Norfolk and becoming TG 33.3, the ships headed south to Bermuda, arriving there on 23 October. Wilhoite and her consorts subsequently trained in ASW tactics out of Great Sound, Bermuda, into November.

Whilhoite returned to New York with TG 33.3 before the unit put to sea for a "barrier patrol" between Brown's Bank and the Nova Scotia entrance to the Gulf of Maine in early December. Detached from Bogue's screen at 1235 on 7 December, Wilhoite assisted Cockrill (DE-398) in developing a sonar contact until 11 December, when the patrol was stopped; Wilhoite put into Norfolk at the end of that time.

Wilhoite rejoined Bogue's screen and departed Norfolk on the day after Christmas of ~~1944~~ 1944, bound for Bermuda. The destroyer escort patrolled with TG 22.3 out of Port Royal Bay before she returned to ~~Massachusetts~~ New York for repairs on 16 January 1945. Wilhoite resumed operations with that

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~
illustrious aircraft carrier on 20 January, planeguarding for her as she conducted carrier ~~planeguarding~~ qualifications (carrier ~~qualifications~~ equals) off Quonset Point, R. I.

Detached from that duty on the 21st, Wilhoite sailed for Casco Bay, Maine, where she exercised in ASW and gunnery for a ~~week~~ week. She again screened and planeguarded Bogue off Quonset Point into early February, while the carrier once more ran ~~car~~ carquals for her embarked air group. The destroyer escort then spent a period of availability at the New York Navy Yard from 8 to 19 February before she engaged in training operations into late March, out of Casco Bay and Portsmouth, N. H.

Wilhoite departed Casco Bay on 28 March, and rendezvoused with TG 22.14--the unit assigned the task of hunting a south-bound U-boat placed by intelligence information at 46-45N, 41-30W--on the following day, ~~28~~ 29 March.

At 1139 on 31 March, Janssen--~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ part of Task Unit (TU) 22.3.17--picked up a sound contact; Wilhoite apparently picked it up soon thereafter and attacked at 1146, her "hedgehog" hurling a pattern of projectiles six minutes later. She felt two deep explosions soon thereafter, but could ascertain no evidence of having scored any hits.

After another brief period of ~~unsuccessful~~ unsuccessful "barrier patrols" between 1 and 6 April, ~~Wilhoite~~ Wilhoite trained in ASW tactics with Mackerel (SS-204) and units of Bogue's TG 22.3 out of New London before she ~~was~~ resumed active U-boat hunting activities. At 2327 on 19 April, Wilhoite went to general quarters to investigate a radar contact, and at 2343 illuminated the area with starshell at 400 yards range. The object of the attention turned out to be a large, drifting iceberg!

while
Meanwhile, the war on the European continent had been nearing a climax, the Battle of the Atlantic continued. Wilhoite, after her near attack on the iceberg on the 19th of April, soon resumed ~~her~~ "barrier patrols" with Bogue's TG 22.3 in ensuing days. She was engaged in screening the carrier ~~when~~ Bogue's planes spotted a U-boat running on the surface at 1300 on 23 April. Bogue's aircraft attacked, but the U-boat "pulled the plug" and went deep, in time to escape.

The next day, U-546 torpedoed and sank Frederick C. Davis (DE-136)--the last ^{American} ~~major~~ combatant ship loss in the Battle of the Atlantic. The U-boat had little time to savor the victory, however, for the entire scouting line of ~~destroyer~~ destroyer escorts to which Frederick C. Davis had been attached moved swiftly to the scene, rescuing their sistership's survivors and immediately commencing ASW operations. Ultimately, ~~U-546~~ U-546 was brought to the surface, damaged, and sunk by gunfire from the destroyer escorts, quickly avenging ~~Frederick C. Davis~~ Frederick C. Davis' loss.

Over the next few days, Wilhoite conducted more "barrier patrols" as part of the unit carrying out sweeps in scouting line formation, the ships formed around two escort carriers, Bogue and Card (CVE-13); the former patrolling to the south, the latter to the north.

At 2000 on 7 May, Wilhoite proceeded with Haverfield (DE-398) and Flaherty (DE-135) to the scene of a "disappearing radar contact that had been made by Otter (DE-210). At 2125, Wilhoite reached the point of contact and commenced a search in company with Haverfield, Flaherty, Otter, Swenning, and Varian (DE-798). At 2202, however, the search was cancelled abruptly, the ships returning to their previous scouting line stations, because while the ships had been engaged in their search, the situation in western Europe had changed drastically. Worn down by pressure from the western Allies on the one hand and the ceaseless heavy pressure by the Russians on the other, Germany surrendered at Reims, France, on 7 May. World War II, as far as the European theater was concerned, was over.

Nevertheless, Wilhoite remained at sea on "barrier patrol" until 9 May, when she headed for New York City. The destroyer escort repaired there from 11 to 19 May before she shifted south for more major repairs and alterations at the Charleston Naval Shipyard, Charleston, S.C., in preparation for the ship's upcoming deployment to the Pacific--still very much an active theater of war in the spring of 1945.

Wilhoite trained at Guantanamo Bay after her refit at Charleston, and then headed for the Pacific, transiting the Panama Canal on 16 July. Arriving at San Diego, Calif., on the 24th, Wilhoite sailed for Hawaii ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ with CortDiv 59--Edsall (DE-129), Stewart (DE-238), and Moore (DE-240)--~~to~~ ^{ing there} arrive on 5 August. In ensuing days,

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

Wilhoite and her consorts ~~XX~~ trained in the Hawaiian Operating Area.

Wilhoite had arrived too late to participate in active operations, however, because the war in the Pacific ended while she was training in the Hawaiian Islands. On 14 August 1945 (west of the international date line), the Japanese accepted the unconditional ~~XXXXX~~ surrender terms stipulated by the Allies in the ~~XXXXX~~ Potsdam Declaration.

Wilhoite consequently departed Pearl Harbor on 20 August bound for Saipan, in the Marianas. After her arrival there, she escorted ~~XXX~~ ⁵⁵ USAT Sea Sturgeon to ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Okinawa in company with the ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ ¹ minesweeper Ptarmigan (AM-376). While engaged in ^{that} local escort duty. Wilhoite was forced to reverse course off Okinawa during a typhoon; the ship did not enter Buckner Bay, but proceeded instead back to Saipan.

16

on 2 September 1954
Reclassified to DER-397, Wilhoite was recommissioned
at the ~~Charleston~~ Charleston Naval Shipyard
on 29 January 1955, Lt. Comdr. Lambert V. Forde in command,
but remained in dockyard hands at Charleston for final
installation of equipment and ^{fighting} tests until 22 March.
She then proceeded, via Norfolk, Va., to Guantanamo Bay,
Cuba, for a rigorous ten-week shakedown ~~period~~. After ^{her}
~~the resultant~~ post-shakedown availability, Wilhoite

sailed for ~~the~~ her new duty station, the Pacific Fleet,
on ~~22~~ 20 July; she officially became part of the
Pacific ~~Fleet~~ Fleet's Cruiser-Destroyer Force on ^{the} 24th July.

Upon her arrival at her new homeport, Seattle, Wash.,
on 12 August, ~~Wilhoite~~ Wilhoite became a unit of CortRon 5,
and soon commenced what would become a regular routine
of duty ~~as a coastal radar picket ship~~ as a coastal radar picket ship
under the overall direction of Commander, Western Continental
Air Defense Command. In the next three years and seven months,
Wilhoite conducted a total of 30 picket tours before
she sailed for ~~Hawaii~~ Hawaii and her new homeport of Pearl
Harbor on 4 March 1959.

For the next four ~~years~~ years, Wilhoite operated ~~out~~ out
of Pearl ~~Harbor~~ Harbor on "barrier patrols" and special operations;
sometimes ^{ranging} she operated as far north as Adak, Alaska, where
on one occasion, in December of 1961, a heavy storm with 50-knot
winds buffeted the ship against a pier, causing some damage.
~~Also~~ In 1961, Wilhoite took part in Operation "Deep Freeze '61",
crossing the Arctic Circle on 8 February. During that cruise, she
visited ports in New Zealand ^{and} Australia before she returned to

17

Besides "special operations" on "barrier patrols" from Pearl Harbor, Wilhoite carried out search and rescue ^(SAR) missions, ready for any eventuality while on station. While on her third SAR patrol in ^{the returning} 1963, the ship ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ sighted a Japanese fishing vessel, ~~XXXXXXXX~~ Kayo Maru, approaching. Wilhoite ^{subsequently} took aboard ~~one~~ Eichi Nakata, a man who ~~she~~ had been bitten by a shark, and took him to Midway where he received medical treatment. Wilhoite ultimately returned to Pearl Harbor after that mission of mercy on 22 October 1963.

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ By the mid-1960's, however, ^{were} further changes in store for the veteran warship; the growing pace of incursions by North Vietnamese-backed Viet Cong communist guerillas against South Viet Nam had resulted in the United States supporting the latter in an escalating fashion. Wilhoite accordingly deployed to the western Pacific (WestPac) in the spring of 1965, beginning a cycle of ^{WestPac} tours that lasted into the late 1960's.

Wilhoite conducted intermittent WestPac deployments, with corresponding Market Time patrols off the coast of Viet Nam, into January of 1969. Hers was unsung duty: long hours of ceaseless patrol, adding the fledgling South Vietnamese Navy in detecting and preventing supplies, weapons and other materials from being infiltrated into ~~XXXXXX~~ South Viet Nam by the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese. Often assisted by only two small boats, a Coast Guard patrol boat and aircraft, ~~the~~ Wilhoite upon occasion had the responsibility for patrol over 2,750 square miles of ocean--an ample assignment for a ship with the ~~size~~ ^{size} and range of a radar picket destroyer escort.

Occasionally, there were periods of excitement to enliven an otherwise ~~xxxxxx~~ tedious duty. On 19 June 1969, Wilhoite relieved Kretschmer (DER-329) on Market Time station, and assumed the duties of "mother ship" to two Navy "Swift" (PCF) boats, providing berthing accommodations for extra crew members and supplying them with food, fuel, and fresh water.

At approximately 2000 on 11 July, a Market Time patrol aircraft detected a ~~xxx~~ steel-hulled trawler running ~~xxx~~ darkened some 55 miles from the coast of South Viet Nam, on a westerly heading. Wilhoite, notified by radio of the trawler's course, set ~~his~~ ^{new} course to close and identify the ship, ~~xxxxxxx~~, commencing covert surveillance as soon as she picked up radar contact. The next morning, 12 July, Wilhoite closed for ~~xxxxxx~~ identification purposes but ^{later} opened the range.

By that point, the trawler ^{had} changed course, heading away from ^{the} coast; ~~xxxxxx~~ Wilhoite accordingly maintained surveillance for three more days. Entering the "Market Time" area, the trawler drew more pursuers--Gallup (PGM-85), USCGC Point Orient (WPB-82319) and PCF-79--all under the command of Comdr. C. R. Stephan, embarked in Wilhoite ^{who} ~~xxxxxxx~~ on ¹⁵ ~~16~~ July, ^{Wilhoite} ~~it~~ ^{tc} intercepted the unidentified trawler five miles from the beach. Ignoring calls to surrender, broadcast by a psychological warfare unit embarked in Point Orient, the ~~xxxxxx~~ trawler was soon taken under fire, running aground in flames on a sandbar at the mouth of the River De Sa Ky, in Quang Ngai province.

Throughout the night, Wilhoite and the ~~other~~ ships intermittently fired into the beached trawler; the following morning, a boarding party went aboard to inspect the damage and the trawler's cargo. The holds were found jammed with guns, ammunition, and explosives-- the largest arms ~~cache~~ cache captured ~~during~~ during the Viet Nam war. Ultimately relieved of her Market Time patrol duties on 26 July, Wilhoite sailed for Hong Kong and a period of recreation.

Alternating the tours of duty on Market Time stations with periods in-port at Hong Kong, Sasebo, and Yokosuka, Wilhoite, periodically returned to such ports as Pearl Harbor and Subic Bay.

~~Wilhoite~~ Not all of the ship's highlights of Market Time operations were combat-oriented ones. On 6 September 1968, for example, Wilhoite was called upon to perform an SAR ~~a search and rescue (SAR)~~ mission, while she was riding out the tail-end of Typhoon ~~Wilhoite~~ "Beess." Assigned to locate a lost Vietnamese Navy PGM, Wilhoite centered her search on a point some 30 miles from the port of Da Nang. Although she never sighted the PGM, however, the ^{radar picket} destroyer escort maintained contact via voice radio; ultimately, the PGM was able to reorient herself and continue on her voyage.

Later, while returning to her patrol station, Wilhoite ^{landing craft} and lost across an Army ~~LCU~~, LCU-1481 that had been adrift for some 48 hours. Typhoon "Bess" had proved a nuisance to the LCU, for it had caused damage that had rendered the craft powerless. Wilhoite stood by while another LCU was dispatched from Da Nang to take the stricken LCU-1481 in tow.

Later that autumn, Wilhoite received a tender availability alongside ~~the~~ the veteran destroyer tender Dixie (AD-14) at Subic Bay, from 25 to 28 September. On that day, the ~~XXXX~~ radar picket destroyer escort sortied for Market Time once more, relieving the Coast Guard cutter Ingham (WPG-35) on station; ^{Wilhoite} she later saw her first action of that deployment when she was called upon to deliver gunfire support in an area ~~XXXX~~ north of An Thoi. There, ~~the~~ Wilhoite shelled a heavily Viet Cong-infested area, destroying or damaging several enemy junks that had attempted to infiltrate war materiel from the north.

Wilhoite departed Vietnamese waters on 15 January 1969, bound for Hawaii. She stopped for fuel at Subic Bay and Apra Harbor, Guam, before she continued on, arriving at Pearl Harbor on 1 February. After a period of tender availability alongside Isle Royale (AD-29), from 17 February to 3 March, Wilhoite underwent a restricted availability at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard before she conducted her sea trials at the end of May. ~~Finally~~ Ultimately, on 2 June, the radar picket destroyer escort departed the Hawaiian Islands for the west coast; she arrived at Bremerton, Wash., on 9 June. There, on 2 July, Wilhoite was decommissioned.

Simultaneously struck from the Navy list, Wilhoite was sold on 19 July 1972 to General Metals Corp., Tacoma, Wash., and scrapped subsequently.

Wilhoite received the Presidential Unit Citation, a Navy Unit Commendation, one battle star for World War II